

Wycombe leap ahead

Wycombe Wan..... 2
Hendon..... 0
(Attendance 3,500)

SERIOUS complications have set in for Hendon on the last lap of the race for the £1,000 prize which goes with the Rothmans Isthmian League championship. A 2-0 defeat by Wycombe at sloping Loakes Park on Tuesday night closed the door a little tighter on Hendon's title hopes. Wycombe emerged as the new favourites, with in-form Bishop's Stortford, the Amateur Cup holders, now their main challengers, writes Fred Harris.

But it's not all over yet by any means. Though Wycombe, with only four games to play, have the points in the bag (12 more than Hendon) they have to meet Stortford at Rhodes Avenue on Tuesday. Hendon could still exert their influence on the destiny of the crown — they entertain the Bishops at Claremont Road on Thursday, May 16 in the penultimate fixture of the season.

There was a pre-match panic

in the Hendon camp as manager Jimmy Quail waited for the arrival of Bobby Childs and Jimmy Wilsonham. Childs, who scored the opening goal which put Hendon on the road to a 2-1 win over Wycombe in October, failed to appear, and Wilsonham, held up by traffic, arrived a minute before kick-off. After a hasty consultation referee Ray Lewis agreed that David Hogwood, who had already changed, could stand down as substitute in favour of Wilsonham.

The biggest mystery of the night was who fouled Hendon goalkeeper John Swannell when he conceded Wycombe's decisive second goal in the 80th minute? Swannell was adamant that he had been fouled by Wycombe's leading scorer Tony Horseman as Paul Birdseye cracked in a free kick from the right. Horseman appeared to jostle as Swannell reached up to gather and the goalkeeper stumbled backwards and allowed the ball to drop into the net.

Swannell, amazed that the goal had been allowed, chased after the match official to protest, but Mr Lewis insisted that Swannell had been impeded by one of his own players. But I am certain that no Hendon player was that close to Swannell at the time.

Trouble was already brewing behind the Hendon goal — as well as in front — when Wycombe took the lead two minutes earlier.

Police had moved into a knot of unruly supporters, who had

earlier been intimidating Hendon fans, when Alan Phillips conceded an indirect free kick on the six-yard line as he tried to shield Wycombe skipper Larry Pritchard from a ball which was going over the bye-line. Terry Reardon tapped the kick to Horseman, who viciously slammed the ball into the far corner of the net for his 40th goal of the season.

Wycombe almost qualified for a £40 scoring bonus just before the end, but substitute Graham Mackenzie, who had replaced a limping Horseman, shot wide of an open goal with Swannell caught off his line.

Christ's College, Finchley, schoolmaster Steve Perrin was menacing for Wycombe, who won with their all-round superiority. But Hendon's spirited, if limited performance helped to make a most entertaining game.

Malcolm Graves, a spokesman for Hendon Supporters' Association, said afterwards: "We were lucky to get away unscathed. Several of our supporters were threatened, but thanks to the interception of the police, who escorted our coach out of the ground, it was not so serious as we anticipated. But it could so easily have got out of hand."

Wycombe Wanderers: J. Marshall, P. Birdseye, R. Grant, K. Mead, D. Bullock, T. Reardon, A. Horseman (injured), L. Pritchard, K. Searle, M. Hollfield, S. Perrin. Substitute: G. Mackenzie.

Hendon: J. Swannell, D. Poole, C. Hand, P. Deadman, A. Phillips, H. Helder, J. Wilson, M. Cooper, J. Baker, K. Somers, R. Cornell (withdrawn). Substitute: J. Wilsonham.